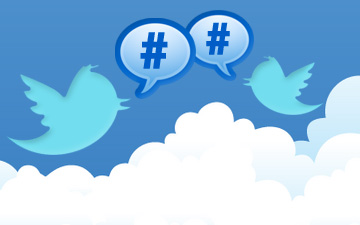
**7 Tips for Better Twitter Chats**

[](http://mashable.com/author/megan-berry/) *Megan Berry is marketing manager for [Klout](http://www.klout.com/" \t "_blank), the standard for online influence. She also blogs at The Huffington Post and Brazen Careerist. You can follow her on Twitter at [@meganberry](http://www.twitter.com/meganberry" \t "_blank).*



Twitter chats are an increasingly common way for people to discuss a topic or passion online. Basically, a group will organize around a specific hashtag so people can follow a single thread of conversation on Twitter. There are now hundreds, if not thousands of regular Twitter chats going on, and for good reason. It’s an easy, low-commitment way to get involved in a conversation with other people in your industry. It’s also a great way to network and get new ideas.

Starting a [Twitter](http://mashable.com/follow/topics/twitter/) chat, however, requires both time and effort. Make sure you’re setting yourself up for a positive outcome with these seven tips.

**1. Be Clear About Your Goals Going Into the Chat**

Some say there are already too many Twitter chats. How does creating a new one (as opposed to joining existing ones) help you or your company? When I spoke to creators of successful chats like #wjchat, #blogchat, #smmeasure and #u30pro, they pointed out some powerful benefits of doing it right. For a company, it can position you as a thought leader and grow brand awareness. For an individual it can help you meet people in your industry and grow your personal brand.

Still, it is not something to take on lightly. You’ll have to put in serious time before you see any results. If you’re in a company, make sure you talk about what success looks like before starting your chat. Consider metrics such as the number of people participating, mentions of your brand, sentiment of mentions, and lead generation.

**2. Choose a Topic People Care About**

How do you know if people care about your chat? They should already be discussing it informally. “It’s better to build a twitter chat around a topic of interest that’s directly related to your brand,” says [David Spinks](https://twitter.com/" \l "%21/davidspinks" \t "_blank), creator of #u30pro, a Twitter chat for young professionals. “In the end, the participants will still relate the chat back to your brand because you’re the one organizing it.

**3. Be Authentic**

“The key to true reach and success is being authentic,” says Robert Hernandez, founder of #wjchat. “#wjchat is something organic and represents a passion shared by others. … If you have a topic you are passionate about, there may be others that are looking to connect with you.” Don’t do it just because you think you’re supposed to. Do it if you are genuinely looking for a way to engage and communicate with a community. Use that passion to stick with the chat when it starts out slow. Spinks says #u30pro’s first chat only had seven people and 150 tweets. Today, their typical chat includes 150 people and 1,200 tweets. Keep engaging and the right people and community should find you.

**4. Choose a Schedule and Be Consistent**

Most Twitter chats occur once a week for an hour, but if you’re just starting out, you may consider a bi-weekly or monthly chat instead as it’s easier to add sessions than to try and cut back. Sheldon Levine of #smmeasure says if he had to start again, he might have made #smmeasure a bi-weekly (as opposed to weekly) chat, simply because of the time commitment involved. Mack Collier of #blogchat points out the importance of choosing a time that works for both you and your audience. You want people to have time to join your chat. Collier suggested “either in the middle of the day around lunch time, or at night around 7 or 8 p.m. Central.”

**5. Plan, But Stay Flexible**

Most Twitter chats have a topical focus each week. The goal is to facilitate the conversation without getting in the way or letting it get out of hand (easier said than done). “Realize also that a Twitter chat for your brand will be another avenue for customers to express their complaints,” Spinks warns. “Twitter chats move fast, and can get out of hand quickly. It’s real time to the fullest.” Get ready for just about any question to come up. If you’re a business, make sure the person running the chat is someone who can speak for the company.

**6. Bring In Thought Leaders**

Don’t be afraid to get others involved, whether you need a partner to develop and plan the chat (#u30pro is operated by a team of four), or great guest “speakers” to help bring in audience. Twitter chats are successful because of the people in them. Do what you can to get great people involved, especially when you’re just starting.

**7. Thank People Who Participate**

If people take the time to engage with your chat, take a moment to thank them individually or in the chat itself. Collier has found huge success by following this strategy. “These are your rock stars, and you need to treat them as such,” he said. “That will simply give them more incentive to spread the word, and help you grow your community.”

Have these tips helped? What advice can you give for organizing a Twitter chat? Let us know in the comments below.

<http://mashable.com/2011/06/23/better-twitter-chat-tips/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+Mashable+%28Mashable%29&utm_content=Twitter>

**HOW TO: Start and Run a Successful Twitter Chat**

[](http://mashable.com/author/david-spinks/) *David Spinks is the Community Manager for [Scribnia](http://www.scribnia.com/" \t "_blank), where the world’s bloggers and columnists are reviewed by their readers. He also blogs at [The Spinks Blog](http://www.davidspinks.com/" \t "_blank) about business, careers and professional communities.*

If you spend enough time on Twitter, chances are you’ll come across an occasional chat being held on the platform. Twitter chats are scheduled gatherings of people on Twitter to discuss pretty much anything that interests them, using a [#hashtag](http://mashable.com/2009/05/17/twitter-hashtags/) to keep track of the conversation. There are chats for everything from blogging to art to agriculture — over 80 of them are listed in [this great running list of Twitter chats](http://spreadsheets.google.com/ccc?key=0AhisaMy5TGiwcnVhejNHWnZlT3NvWFVPT3Q4NkIzQVE&hl=en" \t "_blank).

Over 3 months ago, [Lauren Fernandez](http://www.laurenafernandez.com/" \t "_blank) and I started a weekly Twitter chat for young professionals called [#u30pro](http://twitter.com/" \l "search?q=%23u30pro" \t "_blank). It’s been an extremely rewarding and exciting experience, and I’ve learned a lot about how to run a successful Twitter chat. Here are some tips and tricks for how you can start and run your own chat on Twitter.

**1. Choose a Time, Topic, and Tag**

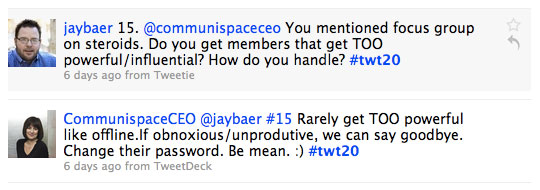


The first thing you have to do is choose a topic. Unless you’re looking to start a competing chat, you’ll probably want to choose a topic that isn’t already being done, so ask around, do some searches, and check the Google Spreadsheet linked above.

You’ll also want to make sure you pick a time that doesn’t conflict with a pre-existing chat in topic areas that might attract similar chatters. Ask around and make sure there aren’t many other chats at the same time, especially if it’s something that both audiences will be interested in. Choosing a time can be the toughest part. Just realize, you’ll never be able to please everyone. I suggest choosing a time that works best for you, to make sure you’ll be committed to it.

Your chat’s hashtag should be as short and explanatory as possible. Everyone who participates in the chat will have to use the hashtag with every tweet, so the shorter the tag, the more space they have to write chat messages.

**2. Choose a Format**



There are a number of different formats that chats can take:

**1. Single Topic, Question Based**

This is how I run the chat I am involved with. We choose a general topic, then ask specific, numbered questions throughout the chat within that topic. Each question gets roughly 15 minutes, and the chat lasts one hour.

**2. Multiple Topic, Question Based**

The longest running chat, [#journchat](http://twitter.com/" \l "search?q=%23journchat" \t "_blank) which was started by Sarah Evans, uses this format. All questions are submitted by participants and numbered. Any topic goes, as long as it’s related to PR, Journalism, and Social Media.

**3. Single Topic, Freeflow**

This is how Mack Collier runs [#blogchat](http://twitter.com/" \l "search?q=%23blogchat" \t "_blank). He chooses a topic, and just lets the discussion take a life of its own. This chat runs for 2 hours.

**4. Q&A**

Jay Baer runs a different kind of chat. He brings in a guest to answer [20 questions](http://twitter.com/" \l "search?q=%23twt20" \t "_blank) over 90 minutes. While the focus is on the guest, many people follow along and share their thoughts on the questions as well.

**5. Free For All**

No specific question, just bring everyone together and let them ask whatever they want. It’s a bit messy and I haven’t seen any chats adopt this format permanently, but I’ve seen a few try it for one week and the results have been great.

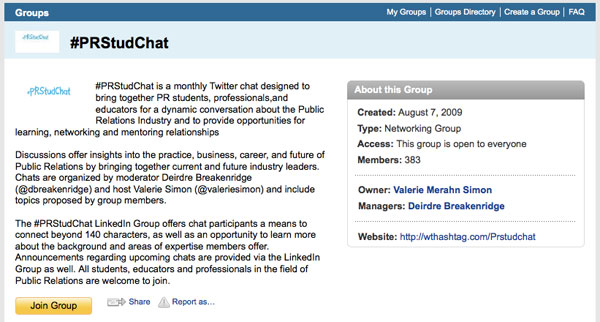
**3. Launch the Chat**

Of course, this will be easier for some than for others, depending on how engaged you are with the audience that you’d like to participate.

Promote it to your community leading up to the chat. Let people know beforehand when they can join and how the chat will be run. It may be smart to reach out to a few key people personally and ask them if they’d be interested in participating.

Be prepared for a slow start. Like any community, a Twitter chat takes time to build participation.

**4. Tips to Help Your Chat Grow**



Whether you’re starting a chat for business or for fun, I can tell you that it is an extremely rewarding and exciting experience. It’s an opportunity to bring people together and engage in valuable and insightful discussion.

If you’re starting it for a business, it is best to choose a general topic that relates to your business, and always keep in mind that these chats are for the community, not for the hosts. If you’re too promotional, your chat will fail.

Here are a few tips to help make sure your chat is a success:

**\* Stay open to new formats.** #journchat got so popular that Sarah Evans began to look for new formats to host the chat, including video streaming, and even a [country-wide live event](http://prsarahevans.com/2009/08/first-journchat-live-recap/" \t "_blank). Always stay open to changing things up based on the community’s needs.

**\* Bring in guests.** Every chat I’ve seen has at some point, brought in a guest moderator to host the chat, or a guest expert to take questions. It’s a great way to bring in a lot of new people and bring credibility to your chat.

**\* Take the chat beyond Twitter.** A monthly chat for public relations students called [#PRStudChat](http://twitter.com/" \l "search?q=%23prstudchat" \t "_blank) created a [LinkedIn group](http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=2183648&trk=hb_side_g" \t "_blank) for their chat, for example. They use it as a forum for the community to interact, and for them to share announcements and ideas.

**\* Consider multimedia.** The weekly [#DesignChat](http://twitter.com/" \l "search?q=%23designchat" \t "_blank) streams its chats live on video each week. The chat’s host and guests interact with participants over Twitter and answer questions on video. Video services like [Tinychat](http://tinychat.com/" \t "_blank) and [Ustream](http://www.ustream.tv" \t "_blank) integrate with Twitter, making them ideal platforms for Twitter chats.

*Disclosure: #DesignChat streams live in the* [*Mashable Lounge*](http://mashable.com/chat/)*, which is powered by Tinychat.*

**\* Promote your participants.** At #u30pro, we send out a weekly digest every morning after the chat, in which we announce a “featured participant,” share 5 blog posts from the u30pro community from that week, write a recap of the chat, and more. Highlighting community members and the things they’re doing gets people more engaged.

**\* Keep it up!** Luckily, Twitter chats are inherently viral. Because when someone participates in your chat, all their tweets appear in their stream with your hashtag, and they bring in their followers. As long as you keep to your schedule and keep holding regular chats, the chat will pick up new participants over time.

*Which Twitter chats do you participate in? What other tips would you give to those trying to start their own Twitter chat? Let us know in the comments.*

<http://mashable.com/2009/12/08/twitter-chat/>

# 10 Ways You Can Use Twitter Lists

[](http://mashable.com/author/sarah-evans/) *[Sarah Evans](http://twitter.com/PRsarahevans" \t "_blank)* is a public relations and new media consultant and speaker at *[Sevans Strategy](http://www.sevansstrategy.com/" \t "_blank)*. She also authors a *[PR and social media blog](http://prsarahevans.com" \t "_blank)* and is the founder of *[#journchat](http://journchat.info/" \t "_blank)*.

Twitter’s new Lists feature is all the rage right now. There are probably already millions of lists, and that number is growing by the minute (or second). So what are people using all these lists for? Are people creating lists just for the sake of creating lists? Savvy individuals are looking for ways to use lists to further their personal/professional agendas, and while we are all still learning how to harness the power of this new feature, here are a few ideas to get the creative juices flowing.

Let us know in the comments what other ways you’re using Twitter Lists.

## 1. Industry Peers and Professionals Lists

One way to use Twitter Lists is to keep your finger on the pulse of your industry. [Tim O’Reilly](http://radar.oreilly.com/" \t "_blank) ([@timoreilly](http://www.twitter.com/timoreilly" \t "_blank)), founder and CEO of O’Reilly Media, for example, created the [Gov 2.0](http://twitter.com/timoreilly/gov20" \t "_bkank) list to accomplish this goal for government tweeters. Once you create your “experts” list, share the link with your peers. (If you’re in a generous mood.) If you have a [Twitter](http://mashable.com/category/twitter/" \t "_blank) network largely made up of industry peers, you’ll save them from reinventing the wheel by creating a public list that everyone can use.



Lists are still new enough that you can be the first to develop an “it” list. In other words, for many industries and topics you could create the de facto list of peers that others follow and reference. A list that garners a large followership means more attention for you and may increase your Twitter followers. Once you create the list, you’ll need to promote it. Add it to a list directory like [Listorious](http://www.listorious.com/" \t "_blank) for additional opportunities for people to view and follow.

## 2. Experts Lists

If you’re an expert, recognize other experts. Technology blogger [Robert Scoble](http://friendfeed.com/scobleizer" \t "_blank) ([@scobleizer](http://twitter.com/scobleizer" \t "_blank)) did this with his recent lists like, “[most influential in tech](http://twitter.com/Scobleizer/most-influential-in-tech" \t "_blank),” and “[web innovators](http://twitter.com/Scobleizer/web-innovators" \t "_blank),” for example. It’s a win both for Robert and for those he recommends. He continues to establish his credibility as a technology thought leader and others benefit from the recognition and online visibility. Many of his lists already have hundreds of followers.

You can also use Twitter Lists to highlight individuals that routinely offer insight, tips, tools, etc. about a particular topic. Do you have certain people you keep on mobile alerts or have a special column for in [Tweetdeck](http://www.tweetdeck.com/" \t "_blank)? It’s most likely a list in the making. If nothing else, lists like these let people you admire and/or listen to know that you appreciate the content they’re putting out.

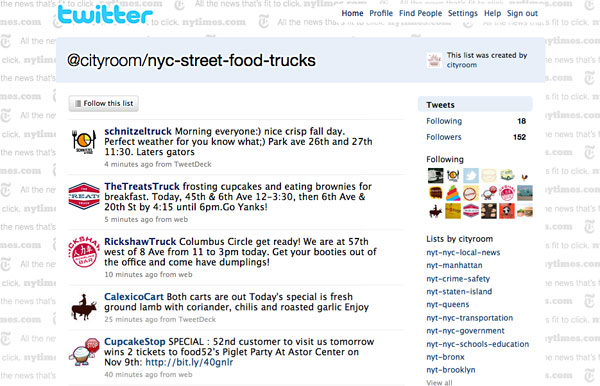
## 3. Recognize and Reward Customers Lists

Lists can be used to promote your clients and/or customers. Depending on your industry, it’s an opportunity for your customers to connect with other like-minded people. You may decide sharing all of your customers on Twitter isn’t right for your business, but you can still take advantage of Twitter Lists to recognize your customers. You could, perhaps, implement a “valued clients of the week” list or run a contest that rewards a certain number of customers with a spot on a special list.

Another way to reward customers is to create a list of your company’s Twitter accounts that offer special deals, discounts, or exclusive announcements.

## 4. Niche Lists

The New York Times’ [City Room](http://twitter.com/cityroom" \t "_blank) crew created the “[NYC Street Food Trucks](http://twitter.com/cityroom/nyc-street-food-trucks" \t "_blank)” list for all things street food in New York City. Creating niche category lists can be very helpful for others, so think outside the box. Maybe there’s an audience who would love a list of all celebrities who have graced the cover of Vogue and tweet. Or, perhaps, a list of viral video stars (e.g., [@daviddentist](http://twitter.com/daviddentist" \t "_blank)) would be useful for some. What niche can you identify that needs a list?



Lists can also be humorous. [@daphnebegonia](http://twitter.com/DaphneBegonia" \t "_blank), who happens to be a dog, curates a list of “[people I have licked](http://twitter.com/DaphneBegonia/people-i-have-licked" \t "_blank).” It’s a funny idea that offers potential, and a concept that can work for other animal-related entities. I’m hoping for a Sea World, “I met Shamu,” list.

## 5. Employee Directory Lists

You might have a link to your Twitter account on your website, but don’t forget to make an official employee Twitter List. You should include all official company accounts, along with employees who tweet on behalf of the organization (or if you have a more open culture, you could include any employee that tweets). Mashable has an [employee list](http://twitter.com/mashable/mashable" \t "_blank), as does [Twitter](http://twitter.com/twitter/team" \t "_blank).

Share the list internally, too. Not only is this a way to aggregate accounts, it also makes monitoring easier. Think about creative ways you can promote your company’s Twitter list (for example, from the signature line of emails, or on your business cards).

## 6. Political Campaign Lists

Running for office? Aggregate your supporters or “friends of” the campaign for increased visibility. It’s important to stay connected to constituents, especially during election time (every vote counts!). In fact, go beyond campaign supporters and create an “official” party list, or a list of all the newspapers that have endorsed a candidate.

If you’re a political reporter or blogger, create a private list of all candidates you’re tracking to keep tabs on their tweets more easily. (This same principal could be applied by journalists or bloggers to any beat, not just politics.)

## 7. Location-Based Lists

Create a list of everyone in your city/town who tweets. Or create a list of city and/or state employees who tweet. If your mayor, village manager, school district board members and others are on Twitter, group them together to create a resource for others in your area.

This idea can work in an official capacity as well. If you’re in charge of a municipality’s website, aggregate the feeds from these lists for your official website to offer real-time updates to your citizens.

## 8. Event Attendees and Live-Tweeters Lists

Hosting an upcoming event? Encourage people to submit their Twitter IDs when they register. Share the list pre-conference and encourage people to connect. Don’t forget to update the list during the conference. You could also create a list of all speakers or sponsors for a conference to share with attendees, who can then familiarize themselves with the conference lineup and supporters before they get there.



Creating a special list of those live-tweeting events can make it easier for people not able to attend to follow the action without worrying about the noise created by extraneous hashtag conversations or spammers.

## 9. Self-Serving Lists

Lists can help you out, too. If you’re out of work, for example, you could create a list of company or recruiter accounts to monitor for job postings. Or if you need to stay current on a topic for work, you could create a list of companies or bloggers active on that subject.

Just the act of taking the time to research a comprehensive (and accurate) list will help you as much as the information that will come through from tweets. And if you decide to share your list, it could have the potential to garner a large following, which can boost your online credibility.

## 10. Promote Your Affiliation Lists

Twitter Lists may also be good for promoting or listing your affiliations. Collegiate alumni associations, for example, are constantly looking for ways to keep people engaged, enter the “University XYZ Alumni List.” This concept works for any group, organization, association, etc.

Journalists, bloggers, promoters, and others could also create a list of affiliations as a way to disclose potential conflicts of interest. A public relations professional, for example, could create a list of their clients as a way to let followers know which of their tweets may exhibit a conflict of interest.

How do you creatively harness the power of public Twitter Lists? Please share in the comments.

<http://mashable.com/2009/11/04/twitter-lists-uses/>